



U.S. Senator

Jim Jeffords



Summer, 2000

## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510-6300

### Report on the Environment

*Dear Fellow Vermonter:*

*As I travel through Vermont, I often hear about the importance of preserving our nation's environment. As Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, I spend much of my time in Washington working on the many national priorities before the Committee, including education funding, health care and disability policy. But in the tradition of many of Vermont's past representatives to Congress, I continue to work with my Senate colleagues on important environmental policies.*

*I am proud to have served Vermont in the United States Congress for close to twenty-five years, and to have served as a State Senator and Attorney General of Vermont just prior to my time in Washington. During these three decades, our nation's leaders have put in place sweeping laws aimed to protect our environment. The National Environmental Policy Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Clean Air Act are just a few of the laws that have brought significant improvement to our air, water and land. However, we can do more.*

*As Congress continues to debate changes to these, and many other important environmental provisions, I will keep the best interest of Vermont and its strong values on natural resource protection in mind. I firmly believe that we can tackle the important environmental issues facing this country in a bi-partisan fashion and achieve significant progress.*

*As you know, I value deeply the opinions of Vermonters, whether they are offered in person, by phone, in letters or by e-mail. And, as usual, I'll be spending as much time as I can in Vermont. In the meantime, I hope you find this newsletter informative.*

*Sincerely,*

  
Jim Jeffords

## 10th Anniversary of the Lake Champlain Special Designation Act

The Lake Champlain basin is one of our nation's most beautiful and valued resources. The importance of the lake to those who depend on it for agriculture, industry and recreation cannot be measured. But most importantly, Lake Champlain's unique environment is home to an unparalleled variety of wildlife.

Recognizing the need to protect this vital resource, Senators Jeffords and Leahy drafted the Lake Champlain Special Designation Act. Passed into law in 1990, the Act created the Lake Champlain Basin Program and Management Conference, which convened representatives of Vermont, New York and Canada to develop plans to protect the quality

of the lake. Since 1990 Senator Jeffords has worked with Senator Leahy to support the Lake Champlain Basin Program with federal funds and technical assistance. Many of the goals of the Conference have been implemented and progress achieved, however much remains to be accomplished.

On this 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Act I join the many dedicated Vermont residents who have participated in improving the health of Lake Champlain. The future health of the lake depends on the active participation of Vermont and New York residents. For information on how to participate, call the Lake Champlain Basin Program, at (802) 655-6382, or visit their web page at <http://www.lcbp.org/>

# Anti-Environment Riders

Each year, Congress must pass thirteen spending bills that fund all federal programs. Often these bills become vehicles for extraneous and controversial proposals that undermine the progress we have made in protecting our nation's environment. In the past, these amendments, called "riders", have attempted to reverse important clean air provisions, weaken wildlife species protections and remove critical water quality standards.

In an effort to end these backdoor efforts to weaken our environmental laws, a number of Senators joined Senator Jeffords in writing to Senator Majority Leader Trent Lott. The letter asked Senator Lott to keep the spending bills free of these hastily drafted anti-environmental provisions and allow changes to federal environmental laws only after full hearings and public comment.

## Jeffords Fights Dirty Coal Plants and Air Pollution

Senator Jeffords was one of the principal negotiators of the 1990 Clean Air Act, an act that has allowed our nation to make progress in improving air quality. Notwithstanding significant increases in population and economic growth, we have still been able to reduce or control emissions. But nationwide, more than thirty percent of residents still live in regions with poor air quality. Vermont is no exception. Even though we have some of the toughest air quality standards in the nation, our health and the health of our forests, lakes and streams continues to suffer from acid rain, ozone haze, mercury and dioxin deposition. Why? Because upwind dirty coal power plants continue to emit greater levels of pollution that ultimately find their way to Vermont's backyard.

In an effort to force these coal plants to clean-up or shut down, Senator Jeffords introduced the Clean Energy Act. This bill would mandate strict emissions standards and create incentives for the use of clean, alternative power. Recently, the Senate Energy Committee debated legislation that would deregulate our electric power industry. The Clean Energy Act was actively considered during this process. Without inclusion of this clean air provision, our region would be unfairly impacted by competitive change in the electric power sector, as other regions of the nation enjoy low energy costs because they are not complying with the clean air standards we live with. **For information on the debate regarding clean air and electric deregulation, contact my office at 1-800-835-5500.**



Senator Jeffords is seen here with Congressman Sherwood Boehlert, R-NY, and Rebecca Stanfield from the U.S. Public Interest Research Group at a press conference to unveil a report on dirty coal plants.



## Transportation Update, Covered Bridges and Rural Roads

Federal support for transportation projects in Vermont increased substantially in the last few years, allowing the state to undertake improvements to many of Vermont's roads and bridges. Federal funding has also been captured for important transportation priorities, including the Missisquoi Bay Bridge, multimodal rail and bus stations in Burlington, Essex Junction and Brattleboro and rail improvements from Bennington to Burlington. Though often an uphill battle, Vermont's Congressional delegation continues to work together to bring these added resources to our state.

Vermont also left a mark on two major pieces of transportation legislation. During consideration of the National Highway System Designation Act, Vermont officials alerted Senator Jeffords to the negative impact a one-size-fits-all road design would have on Vermont's beautiful rural roads. Jeffords amendment to this legislation was adopted, granting states design flexibility for those roads placed on the National Highway System, avoiding the need to unnecessarily widen and flatten some of Vermont's most historic roads.

Also, at Jeffords request, the Transportation Equity Act, known as TEA-21, contained a five year, \$50 million provision to protect our nation's historic covered bridges. This legislation, the National Historic Covered Bridge Preservation Act, will provide grants to towns and states to preserve and protect these beautiful national treasures. **For further information or a copy of the application for your local covered bridge, please contact the Vermont Agency of Transportation at (802) 828-2621.**

## Champlain Valley Heritage Corridor

At Senator Jeffords request, the National Park Service recently completed a comprehensive report assessing the suitability and feasibility of Congress designating a heritage corridor in the Champlain Valley. A team of planners from the National Park Service worked in consultation with local citizens, government representatives, scholars, and local businesses to evaluate how to best coordinate the preservation and interpretation of the historic resources of the Champlain Valley. Not surprisingly, the NPS determined that the Champlain Valley holds one of the richest and best preserved collections of cultural resources to be found anywhere in the United States, and that further investment of federal resources is warranted to preserve and promote these resources. Many of the defining moments in the birth of this great nation occurred in our region. Most of the sites of these events are well known, others, such as a ship from Benedict Arnold's fleet, are just being discovered.

Senator Jeffords believes that preserving Vermont's heritage is critical. Cultural heritage tourism can also become a tremendous economic engine for the region. A section of the report indicates that establishment of a National Heritage Corridor, or similar designation would generate about \$50 million a year in new economic activity in the region. Well over 150 State, local and non-governmental organizations are currently involved in managing, protecting and promoting the heritage resources of the Champlain Valley. A unified program, and adequate federal resources have, however, been lacking, and Jeffords hopes that the full benefits of our rich heritage will be realized in the near future.

**Copies of the recently released Champlain Valley Heritage Corridor report are available in public libraries throughout the region, and on the Internet at [www.nps.gov/boso/planning/Champreport.htm](http://www.nps.gov/boso/planning/Champreport.htm)**

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## Dairy Compact Extended

Last year Senator Jeffords helped secure a two year extension of the Northeast Dairy Compact and the permanent extension of Option 1A, a federal pricing structure beneficial to Vermont dairy farmers. Called the most important issue before Congress last year by Vermont Governor Howard Dean, Senator Jeffords secured key support for the Compact from

Senate and House leaders. The Compact, enacted in 1996, has been vital to preserving a fair price for milk that is produced in Vermont. The Compact has added more than \$45 million to Vermont's agricultural economy and helped protect Vermont farmers from the volatility in the price of milk experienced by the rest of the nation. Economically viable farms are critical to preserving the open, working landscape in the face of rapid residential and commercial development. **If you are interested in information regarding the Northeast Dairy Compact please visit the Compact Commission website at [www.dairycompact.org](http://www.dairycompact.org).**

## Clean Rivers and Dams

Vermont is home to over 2,000 dams of all sizes that impact Vermont's 5,000 river miles. Many of these dams were built in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when industries were located along rivers so that they could use dams for running machinery, dispose of waste, and transport raw materials and goods. Most of these dams no longer serve any commercial purpose and sit in disrepair, posing a significant safety threat and fundamentally altering the surrounding environment.

In early June, Senator Jeffords introduced the Vermont Dam Remediation and Restoration Program Act. This bill allows the Army Corps of Engineers to enter into partnership with State and municipal dam owners to assess and modify dams. The expertise and resources of the Corps would provide much needed assistance to dam owners who would otherwise be unable to properly assess and modify dangerous, structurally unsound or environmentally harmful dams.

## Conservation and Reinvestment Act

This Congress has an historic opportunity to approve legislation providing critical funding for important conservation efforts. Currently there are a variety of legislative proposals pending in the U.S. Senate that would reinvest Outer Continental Shelf oil drilling revenues into important national conservation programs. These bills would make wildlife conservation, land protection, and historic preservation resources available to Vermont and the entire nation. In addition, they will help small communities afford public recreation facilities that would otherwise not be possible, bringing the benefits of outdoor recreation close to where we live and work. Senator Jeffords has written his colleagues urging them to pass legislation that permanently and fully funds important conservation, preservation and recreation programs.



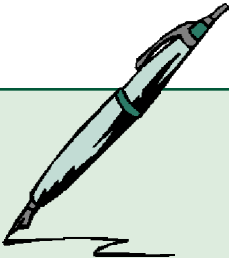


Senator Jeffords is seen here with Jane Goodall, one of the world's leading authorities on great apes.

## Jeffords Legislation Protects Great Apes

Great ape populations currently face many threats, including the problems created by the growing illegal bushmeat trade. This trade, which is being facilitated by the construction of inroads to logging areas, is the greatest threat facing the great apes. Chimpanzees, gorillas, and bonobos, face population decline due to increased illegal trade, powerful weapons, and high market prices. Some estimates suggest that several thousand apes are killed every year across West and Central Africa, a level that is unsustainable and means the destruction of viable populations.

In response to this crisis, Senator Jeffords introduced the Great Ape Conservation Act of 1999. The bill is modeled after the very successful Asian and African Elephant Conservation Acts which Jeffords authored, and authorizes up to \$5 million per year for projects aimed at the conservation and protection of great apes and their habitats. Without immediate action, not only will great apes face extinction, but their ecosystems will suffer as well. This legislation will provide funding to protect apes in their native habitat and support local farming, education and enforcement projects.



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